

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic Webster School

and/or common Webster School

2. Location

street & number 1644 Wyandotte

___ not for publication

city, town Kansas City

___ vicinity of

congressional district

#5-Hon. Richard Bolli

state Missouri

code 29

county Jackson

code 095

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	___ occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	___ no	___ military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name The Ramos Group

street & number 101 West 11th St.

city, town Kansas City

___ vicinity of

state Missouri 64105

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of Recorder of Deeds

Jackson County Courthouse

street & number

415 East 12th St.

city, town

Kansas City

state Missouri 64106

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Historic Kansas City Foundation

title 1. Inventory of K.C. Architecture has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ☒ no

date 1977

___ federal ___ state ___ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Historic Kansas City Foundation

city, town Kansas City

state Missouri 64105

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WEBSTER SCHOOL

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2, Missouri State Historic Survey
1981 state
Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Program
Jefferson City Missouri 65102

ITEM NUMBER 9

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Kansas City Star, May 25, 1899.

Kansas City Star, May 26, 1899.

Minutes of the Kansas City School Board, 1883, 1884, 1885 and 1887.

Perry, Milton. "Webster School Building," unpublished typescript located at
Historic Kansas City Foundation, Kansas City, Mo., 1978.

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thence north along the west line of Wyandotte Street 140 feet; thence west and
parallel to the north line of 17th Street, 164.25 feet to the east line of an alley;
thence south along the east line of said alley 140 feet to the north line of 17th
Street; thence east along the north line of 17th Street 164.25 feet to the
point of beginning.

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2. James M. Denny, Section Chief, Survey-Nominations
and State Contact Person April, 1981
Department of Natural Resources (314) 751-4096
Historic Preservation Program Missouri 65102
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☐ good
☒ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Webster School, 1644 Wyandotte Street, Kansas City, Missouri is a two-story brick structure designed in a Victorian style derived from Italianate . . . Design elements which denote that style are enumerated below.

EXTERIOR

Over-all dimensions

The building consists of two rectangular pavilions connected by a narrow passageway (Plate 5). The pavilion which fronts on Wyandotte measures 76 feet (on Wyandotte) by 80 feet (on 17th St.). The other pavilion is located to the west and measures 76 feet by 36 feet.

The original floor plan provided a basement, four rooms on each floor and an attic in the larger pavilion and four rooms, an attic and a basement in the smaller. Some of the rooms have been divided into offices.

Rooms in both pavilions are arranged symmetrically about a longitudinal axis, a characteristic often found in Richardsonian Romanesque buildings. Also characteristic are the bulky massing and roofline broken by gabled wall dormers on the east and west and by conical roofs of flanking stair towers on the north and south.

Construction Materials and Colors

The building is constructed of pressed brick laid in common bond throughout most of the structure and patterned brick in some areas. Walls are 16 inches thick. The brick has been painted a buff color. Paint is peeling in many areas to reveal red brick. The building was probably not painted originally. Red brick is characteristic of Richardsonian Romanesque structures. Stone is used for some decorative detailing.

The roof on the larger pavilion is composition shingle, replacing original slate. Roofing on the smaller pavilion is slate.

Openings

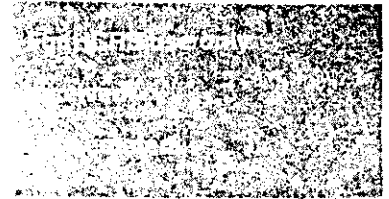
East facade:

1. The main entrance is located in the center of the east facade. The large portico (Plate 2) supported by four rectangular columns is of a different material (sandstone) and of a different style than the rest of the building. Carved into the lintel above the columns is the name Midland Radio Schools. This portico is a later addition probably dating from 1945 when the building was purchased by Midland Radio Institute. Included in this alteration are entrance doors with semi-circular arch above, terra cotta wall covering surrounding doors, and windows flanking doors which have been filled in with glass bricks.

2. Windows are symmetrically arranged on the first story, two pairs

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on either side of the entrance portico. The second story has an irregular arrangement of windows, three on the left side of the facade, four in the center, recessed portion above the entrance, and four on the right side (Plate 1).

All windows are double-hung sash type and originally all had transoms which have been covered. Windows on second story are surmounted by relieving arches, characteristic of Richardsonian Romanesque

North and South facades:

1. Side entrances to the building are located in connecting passageways. Semicircular arches cover doors; elliptical relieving arches cover windows of second story of passageway.

2. Windows are symmetrically placed and evenly spaced on these facades except for stair tower windows which are slightly lower than windows on flat wall sections. Windows have transoms which consist of 15 square panes of glass, many of which have been covered. Windows throughout the structure are of tall, narrow proportions. As on the east facade, windows on the first story have square heads and are surmounted by relieving arches on the second story.

West Facade:

1. No entrance on the west facade.

2. Central window is wider than other windows on both stories (Plate 6). Central window is flanked by two narrow windows and three wider windows on both sides. Arched window in gabled dormer.

Decorative Details

East Facade:

1. Basement and first story are separated by a projecting string course molding.

2. Window transoms on first story have been covered with recessed rectangles of brick.

3. A band of stone approximately 1 foot wide runs above the first story windows.

4. A string course divides first and second stories.

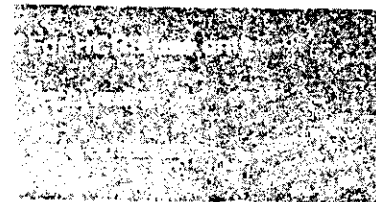
5. Facade is divided into three sections laterally; middle section is recessed.

6. Corbeled brick surrounds windows on second story (Plates 3 and 4).

7. A band of stone approximately 1 foot wide runs across facade at tops of second story windows.

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8. Cross pattern set into brick on left side of facade flanking and in between windows.

9. Corbeled brick at cornice.

10. Gabled wall dormers on left and right sides of facade; left dormer wider than right dormer. Patterned brick on both dormers, but patterns are different (Plates 3 and 4). Characteristic of Richardsonian Romanesque: string courses, stone bands, patterned brick, gabled wall dormers.

North and South facades:

1. String course below windows of first story.

2. Band of stone approximately 1 foot wide runs above windows of first story.

3. String course below second story.

4. Band of stone approximately 1 foot wide runs across facade at tops of windows of second story.

West facade:

1. String course below windows of first story.

2. Band of stone above windows, of first story, as above.

3. String course below second story.

4. Stone band at tops of second story windows.

5. Corbeled brick at cornice.

6. Gabled wall dormer in center with stepped corbeled brick (Plate 7).

7. Wood fascia of dormer ends in carved scroll.

INTERIOR

The interior has been remodeled and rooms have been divided. It is in poor repair. Walls are paneled to approximately 5 feet high with oak (original) which has been painted, but could be restored.

ALTERATIONS

Exterior

1. Walls, now painted a buff color, were probably red brick.

2. Window transoms have been bricked in or covered in some other way.

3. Material and style indicate the addition of the large entrance portico.

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Interior

Rooms have been divided and woodwork painted. The interior has been redecorated many times.

CONDITION

The building is in fair condition. It is vacant, but in no immediate danger of demolition.

SITE

The Webster School is located on the northwest corner of 17th and Wyandotte Streets on a raised site ranging from approximately two to ten feet above street level. A rough-cut limestone retaining wall surrounds the property; the wall is surmounted by a metal railing. The yard is paved with brick across the east front and along the south. Grass is growing between the bricks. The north is paved with asphalt as is the west. These areas are used for parking. The front and side yards are landscaped with hedges.

This location is a commercial area southwest of Kansas City's Central Business District.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1885, 1887

Builder/Architect Mumma & Wood/ Manuel A Diaz, 1885
William F. Hackney 1887

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Webster School is significant because of its architectural style. It is one of a few surviving of the many that were built in the 1880's in Kansas City that were executed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Examples of this style which have been demolished were the Old City Hall, the Old Jackson County Courthouse, and the original Board of Trade. Thus, the Webster School survives as an important example of a period in Kansas City's architectural history which has been virtually destroyed.

It is also significant as one of the oldest school buildings in Kansas City. (There is none earlier that has a documented date and is part of the Kansas City school system, but I hesitate to say oldest.) It is an example of the earliest scientifically designed school buildings in Kansas City. Previous buildings were "plain brick of four, six and eight rooms, with narrow stairways and no enclosed cloakrooms...heated with coal stoves and ventilated by raising and lowering windows." Eleven schools were built during the 1880's including this one. Marked improvements were made in the interior arrangements and convenience of the rooms. Better methods of heating, ventilating, seating and lighting were adopted.¹

HISTORICAL DATA

The Kansas City School Board authorized purchase of land at the northeast corner of 17th and Wyandotte Streets on April 24, 1885, just 2 ½ weeks after the public had approved \$60,000 in school bonds.² It bought a 146 x 164½ foot lot from A.A. Whipple, cashier of the Citizen's National Bank, 6th and Delaware, for \$6,000.³ Bids for the building were opened on July 2. They ranged from a high of \$29,966 to \$14,975. The contract was awarded to Charles R. Mumma. Mumma was the partner of W.H. Wood in the firm of Mumma & Wood⁴ who listed themselves in the City Directory as carpenters or general contractors specializing in "modern theatrical stagework."⁵ Mumma & Wood began work immediately and had the building ready for occupancy in November. In January 1886 classes were being held there.⁶

The building was designed by Manuel A. Diaz, the school board architect. Diaz (who listed himself as a civil engineer in the City Directory) was the first person to hold that position. Previously the board hired local architects for specific projects. Diaz was appointed on April 17, 1884 and remained until April 7, 1887. He drew plans for the "new Central School," Jefferson School at 17th and Garfield Avenue, Wendell Phillips School on Cherry Street, and the Garfield, Bryant and Adams Schools. During his tenure several buildings were also enlarged.⁷

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It has never been determined whether the school was named for Noah Webster the lexicographer or Daniel Webster the statesman but evidence points to the latter. Seven schools were opened in 1886 and five of them Garfield, Garrison, Douglas, Madison and Adams Schools were named for persons active in government. Only one, Bryant, was named for a literary figure.⁸

Webster School was enlarged by a four-room addition on the west during the summer of 1887. It is a separate 63 x 75½ foot building connected with the original block by a narrow hallway and contains two rooms on each floor and a basement. Even the attics of the two buildings are connected by the hallway.⁹

The addition was designed by Diaz's successor, William F. Hackney, who was appointed school board architect May 19, 1887. He was placed in charge of "all plans and specifications for all new buildings and additions, and "superintended the building of buildings." A native of Springfield, Missouri, Hackney came to Kansas City shortly before his appointment from Des Moines. While there, according to one source, "he planned the Iowa State Capitol Building." He was school architect for ten years until the position was abolished. During that time he designed twenty schools. Hackney, who accepted a former assistant, Charles A. Smith as his partner, committed suicide in 1899. Among the more outstanding buildings left from the partnership is the old Kansas City Public Library Building. The Webster addition was his first Kansas City project.¹⁰

Webster School was a part of the Kansas City school system for 45 years, serving a neighborhood characterized by workingmen's houses, small apartments and commercial buildings. Gradually the character of the neighborhood changed as larger business houses replaced homes and stores and the population dwindled. It was closed in 1932. The building lay vacant for six years, when it was leased to the State of Missouri for Social Security offices. In 1938 it was sold to the Helping Hand Institute for \$8,875 to be traded with the Kansas City Association for the Blind for property at 20th Street and Madison Avenue. The State continued to use the school building until 1945 when the Midland Radio School acquired it.

While Midland was housed in the Kansas City Power & Light Building the first television signal in Kansas City was transmitted. Midland modernized the Webster School on the interior and used it for twenty years. The Institution's name went through several changes: Midland Radio & Television School, Central Institute of Technology and Missouri Institute of Technology.

In 1969 Bell & Howell purchased the building. The Institute moved to a new location in January 1977 and the Webster School has been vacant since that time. In 1978 Historic Kansas City Foundation acquired the building in order that it be preserved. They sold it to the Ramos Group, the current owners, with restrictive facade covenants.

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CONCLUSION

The Webster School is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with a local area of significance in the categories of architecture and education. It is one of the oldest surviving schools in Kansas City, "scientifically designed", and it is an example of a style, the Italianate Style, popular in Kansas City in the 1880's for commercial and civic buildings but which has not survived in most cases.

FOOTNOTES

1. Milton Perry, "Webster School Building," unpublished typescript located at Historic Kansas City Foundation, Kansas City, Mo., 1978.
2. Minutes of the Kansas City School Board, April 12, 1885.
3. Ibid., April, 1885.
4. Ibid., July 2, 1885.
5. Kansas City Directory, 1883, p. 122.
6. "Webster School Building a Preservation Challenge," Historic Kansas City News, December, 1977, p. 8.
7. Ibid.
8. Perry, Milton, Op. Cit.
9. Minutes of the Kansas City School Board, May 19, 1887.
10. Minutes of the Kansas City School Board, May 19, 1887; Kansas City Star, May 25 and May 26, 1899.
11. Kansas City Journal, Jan. 6 and Feb. 7, 1938; Minutes of the Kansas City School Board, Book O, p. 235.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Annual Reports of the Kansas City Schools, 1883-84, 1885-86, and 1886-87.

Kansas City Journal, Jan. 6, 1938.

Kansas City Journal, Feb. 7, 1938. (continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name "Kansas City Mo.-Kansas"

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 15 362830 4328100
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification All that part of the Southwest 1/4 of the Southwest 1/4 of Section 5, Township 49, range 33, described as follows: Beginning at the northwest corner of 17th and Wyandotte Streets in Kansas City, Missouri, as said streets are now located and established; (cont'd)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joan L. Michalak, Architectural Historian

organization

date 1 March 1981

street & number 905 E. 5th St.

telephone (816) 474-5073

city or town Kansas City

state Missouri 64106

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national state X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Director, Department of Natural Resources
title and State Historic Preservation Officer

date

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

WEBSTER SCHOOL

COUNTY: Jackson
LOCATION: 1644 Wyandotte, Kansas City, Mo.
OWNER: The Ramos Group
ADDRESS: 101 West 11th Street, Kansas City, Mo. 64105
DATE APPROVED BY A.C.: June 25-26, 1982
DATE SENT TO D.C.: July 20, 1982
DATE OF REC. IN D.C.: July 27, 1982
DATE PLACED ON NATIONAL REGISTER: September 2, 1982
DATE CERTIFICATE AWARDED
(AND PRESENTER): April 20, 1983
Mailed from Central Office
DATE FILE REVIEWED:

The Webster School is significant because of its architectural style. It is one of a few surviving of the many that were built in the 1880's in Kansas City that were executed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Examples of this style which have been demolished were the Old City Hall, the Old Jackson County Courthouse, and the original Board of Trade. Thus, the Webster School survives as an important example of a period in Kansas City's architectural history which has been virtually destroyed.

WEBSTER SCHOOL
1644 Wyandotte
Kansas City, Missouri

#1 of 7

Photographer: Joan L. Michalak
March 1981

Neg. Loc.: The Ramos Group
101 West 11th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64105

View from the west; detail of west facade.



#2 of 7

WEBSTER SCHOOL
1644 Wyandotte
Kansas City, Missouri

Photographer: Joan L. Michalak
March 1981

Neg. Loc.: The Ramos Group
101 West 11th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64105

View from the west of west facade.



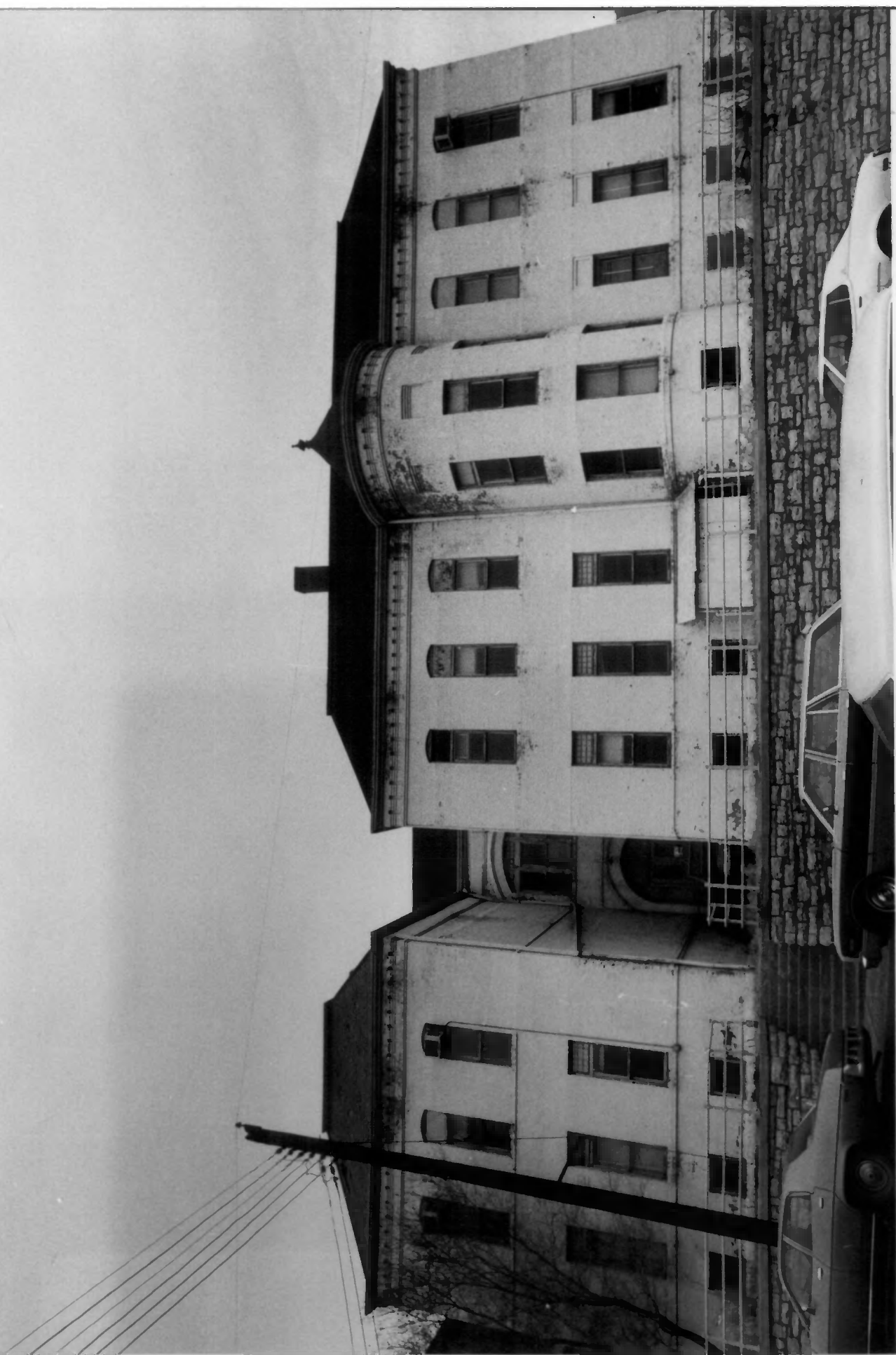
WEBSTER SCHOOL
1644 Wyandotte
Kansas City, Missouri

#3 of 7

Photographer: Joan L. Michalak
March 1981

Neg. Loc.: The Ramos Group
101 West 11th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64105

View from the south of south facade.



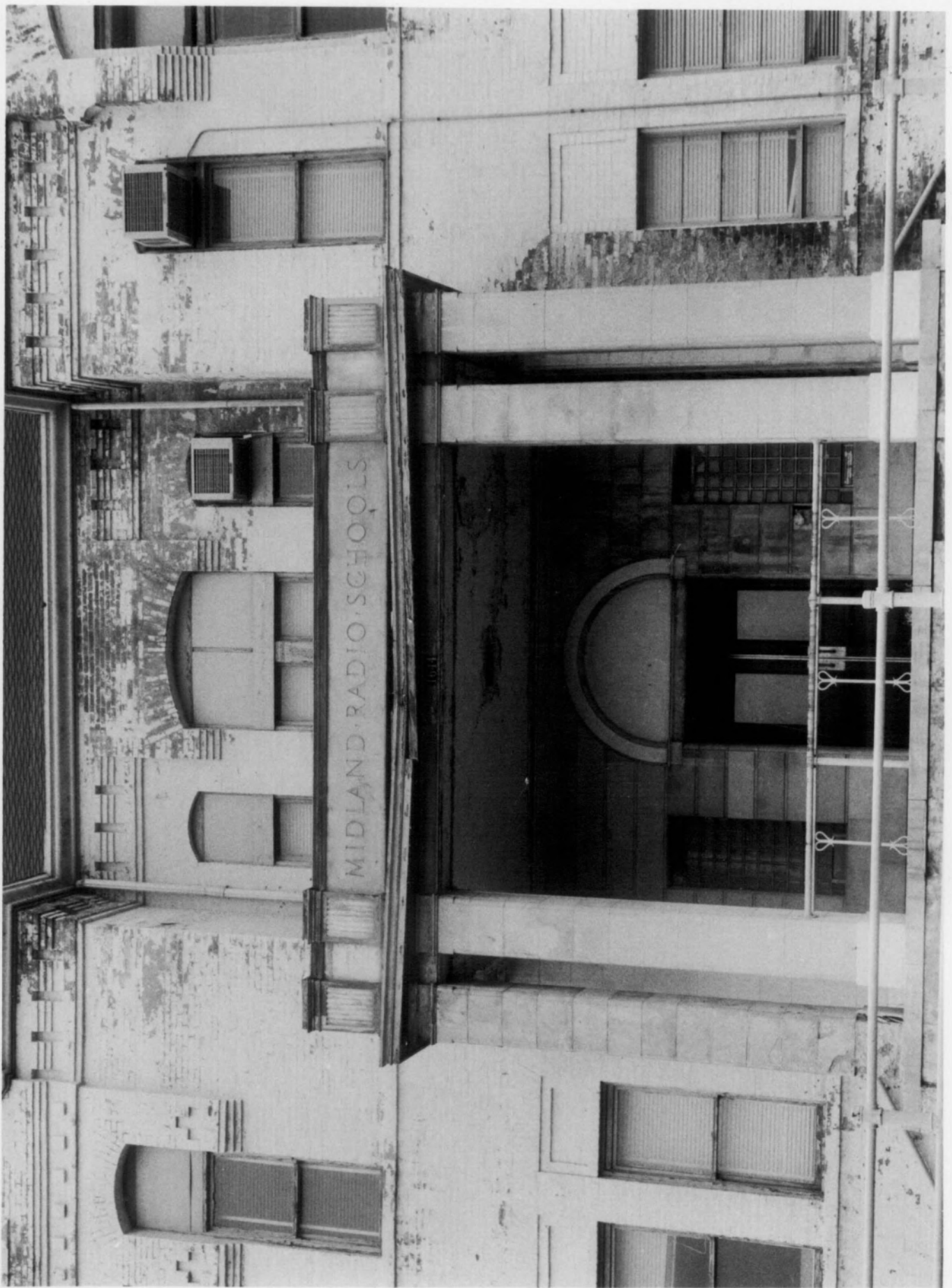
#4 of 7

WEBSTER SCHOOL
1644 Wyandotte
Kansas City, Missouri

Photographer: Joan L. Michalak
March 1981

Neg. Loc.: The Ramos Group
101 West 11th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64105

View from the east; detail of entrance on
Primary (east) facade.



#5 of 7

WEBSTER SCHOOL
1644 Wyandotte
Kansas City, Missouri

Photographer: Joan L. Michalak
March 1981

Neg. Loc.: The Ramos Group
101 West 11th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64105

View from the east; detail from east facade.



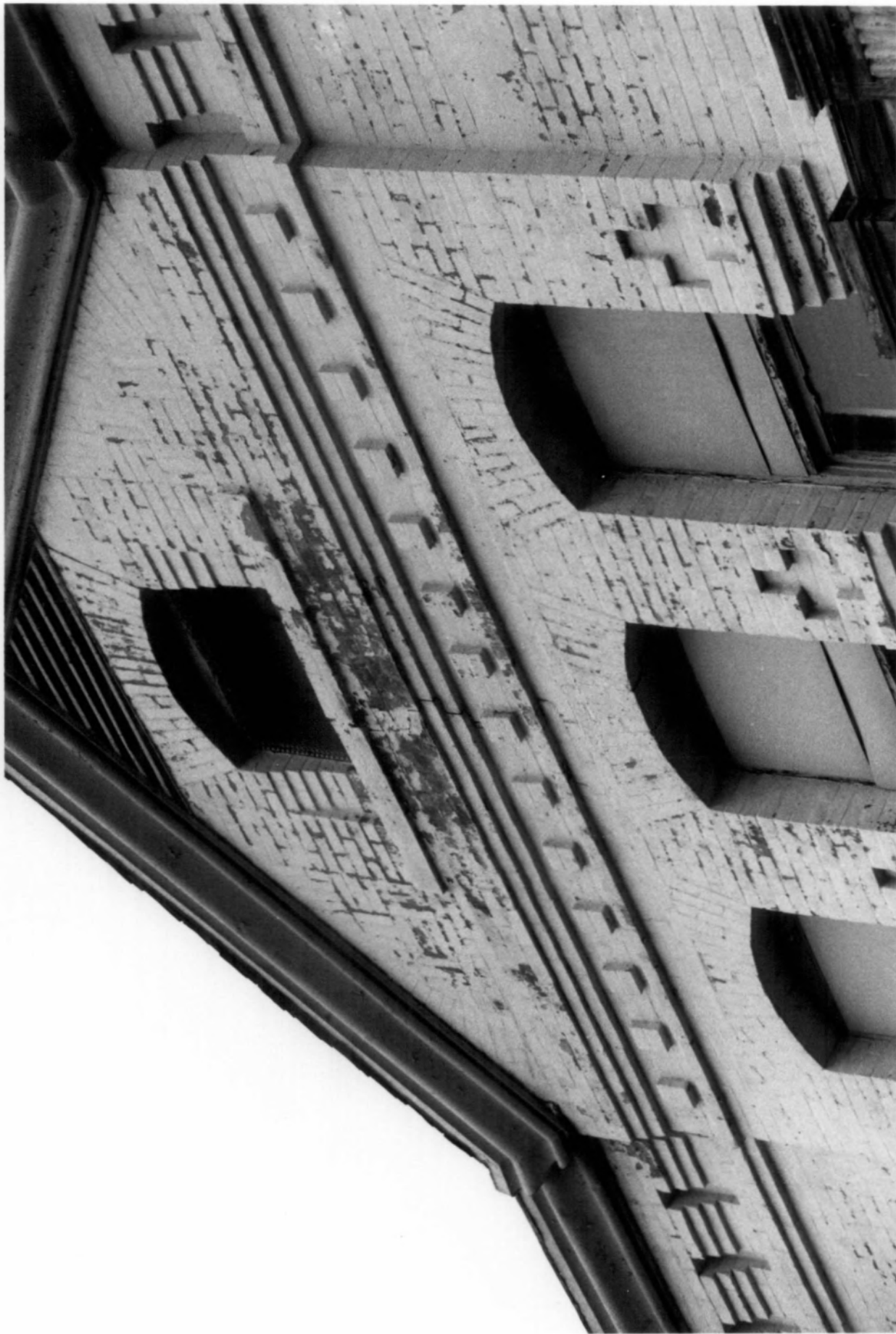
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WEBSTER SCHOOL
1644 Wyandotte
Kansas City, Missouri

Photographer: Joan L. Michalak
March 1981

Neg. Loc.: The Ramos Group
101 West 11th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64105

View from the east; detail of east facade.



WEBSTER SCHOOL
1644 Wyandotte
Kansas City, Missouri

#7 of 7

Photographer: Joan L. Michalak
March 1981

Neg. Loc.: The Ramos Group
101 West 11th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64105

View from west; detail of west facade.

